

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Salvation, Session 13, Justification, Number 2, Historical Reconnaissance And Systematic Formulations**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Salvation. This is session number 13, Justification, Number 2, Historical Reconnaissance and Systematic Formulations.

We continue our study of salvation with the doctrine of justification.

In an effort to be fair, I'm working with the official Roman Catholic documents. I did not anticipate my zeal coming through so strongly, but I am zealous for the gospel. So, I hope I am being respectful, but I do not apologize for being zealous for the gospel.

If Trent is the historical statement of Rome, vis-a-vis the Reformational doctrines, the repudiation of those doctrines, and the enlargement and clarification of Roman Catholic dogmas concerning justification. The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church in 1992 is a very important document, applying many of the results of the Council of Vatican II in the mid-60s, and millions of copies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992 are current around the world. The Roman Catholic Church has not rejected the teachings and anathemas of Trent.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1992 is not as thorough as Trent due to its popular genre. This important document was promulgated by Pope John Paul II and commended by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later, Ratzinger, excuse me, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, or rather Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger would be correct, I believe, later Pope Benedict XVI. Protestants find many points of disagreement with it concerning justification.

The Catechism's doctrine of justification reflects the Council of Trent. A consideration of Article II, Grace and Justification, bears this out. I'll mention the paragraph numbers of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

If you want to have an authorized, it does bear the imprimatur, an authorized, authorized statement of Roman Catholic teaching in a popular, popularly expressed, relatively short compass; this is a great source. Some statements contain teachings with which we agree, with which I agree, such as the following, except for its references to baptism and God's making us inwardly just. Justification has been merited for us by the passion of Christ, the sufferings of Christ, who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men.

Justification is conferred in baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ and the gift of eternal life.

The notes cite the Council of Trent in Romans 3:21 to 26. This is in paragraph 1992 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. I should say that I not only disagree with the notion of God making us inwardly just or righteous but also with the fact that justification is *ex opere operato*, which is automatically conferred by baptism.

Rome's teaching is that its sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, by the work worked. The meaning is that a Catholic priest who is ordained by a bishop receives the right to baptize in the name of the Trinity on behalf of the Catholic Church and to offer Christ in the supposed sacrifice of the mass. The Catechism further defines justification as the Holy Spirit's power to cleanse us from our sins and communicate to us the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ and baptism.

Three biblical quotations follow, two of which treat progressive sanctification. Romans 6:3 and 4, verses 8 and 11. The next paragraph deals with dying to sin, being born to a new life, and union with Christ, none of which belongs to justification proper.

In agreement with Trent, the Catechism teaches quote that justification, quote, establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom, close quote. We cannot be saved without the Spirit's enabling our free will, but we say yes or no to God's word, paragraph 1993. The Catechism goes beyond Trent when it speaks of people becoming divinized, and as proof, cites Athanasius on deification, paragraphs 1987, 1988.

The Spirit's, quote, first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, a close quote, defined as when quote, moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. There follows a quotation from Trent, quote; justification is not only the remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior person, close quote. Once more, the Catechism includes progressive sanctification in justification; quote, justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness.

It reconciles man with God. It frees from enslavement to sin, and it heals paragraphs 1989, 1990. Again, quote, the Holy Spirit is the master of the interior life.

By giving birth to the inner man, justification entails the sanctification of his whole being, close quote, paragraph 1995. There's a tremendous confusion in this Catechism between progressive sanctification and justification, which again would lead the person in the pew of the Roman Catholic Church to seek God's favor and

acceptance by being a good Catholic, which is not the way to find God's favor and acceptance, whether one tries to be a good Catholic or a good Protestant or a good anything else. It's by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, yes, we want to please him and obey him and do his will. Further confirmation that Rome's views haven't changed is provided by Rahner, Karl Rahner, and Vorgrimler's *Dictionary of Theology*, 1981. This tool defines justification in terms similar to those of the Council of Trent.

Quote: justification is the event in which God, by a free act of his love, brings man into that relationship with him that a holy God demands of man. He does so by giving man a share of his divine nature through the word of faith and the signs of the sacraments. This justice, or righteousness, which is not merely imputed in juridical or forensic fashion but makes a man truly just, is at the same time the forgiveness of sins.

There can be no reflexive certainty of salvation for any individual. This justice, righteousness, God-given and received, can also be lost if a man rejects divine love by serious sin. Man can both preserve and continually increase justification.

Many of those ideas are more modernly expressed teachings of the Council of Trent. I won't deal with this in any more detail; perhaps enough has been done. I will respond to it in the justification presentation and in the scriptural presentation as well.

The Reformation and Justification. The 16th-century Protestant Reformation was chiefly a theological movement, although it had repercussions in political, social, economic, and cultural domains as well. The Reformers focused on the rediscovery of the message of salvation.

Far from being uniform, the Reformation produced Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, and Anabaptist churches, as well as the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation in reaction to Protestantism. Nevertheless, several Reformation churches unitedly embraced the gospel. The Reformation churches agreed on the gospel because they held to *sola scriptura*.

The Bible alone is the chief authority for theology and ethics. This was the first of five Reformation *solas*, the others being *sola fidei*; salvation is through faith alone in Christ, not good works. *Sola gratia*, we are saved by God's grace alone.

*Solus Christus*, Christ alone is the only mediator between God and humanity, and *solus Deo gloria*; all glory belongs to God alone. *Sola scriptura*, the Bible is our ultimate norm, judging other norms. *Sola fidei*, salvation is by faith alone, not faith plus works.

Sola gratia, salvation is by God's grace alone. Solus Christus, Christ is the only mediator, and soli Deo gloria, all glory belongs only to God. Practically, sola scriptura meant that the Reformers rejected Rome's view that sacred scripture and sacred tradition were equally authoritative.

Instead, sola scriptura elevated scripture to the supreme place for doctrine and Christian living. Calvin, to cite one example, acknowledged the authority of reason, tradition, and experience but sought deliberately and consistently to place scripture over these lesser authorities, sitting in judgment on them. Applying sola scriptura to salvation, Luther came to understand the Bible's central message as one of free justification, received by faith alone in Christ, resulting in the forgiveness of sins.

The major Reformers accepted Luther's doctrine of justification and strongly opposed the medieval Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. Although Rome's teaching began with God's prevenient grace, such grace enabled sinners' free will to believe in Christ and perform good works that merit eternal life. The Catholic Church taught that justification is not forensic, whereby God declares sinners righteous in Christ.

Rather, it is transformational or transformative, beginning a process that may lead to final salvation. Thus, Rome conceives of salvation as a synergism between God and humans. By contrast, the Reformers held to a monergistic salvation, with God alone saving sinners from beginning to end.

Further, the Roman Church taught that the Church alone was the fount of God's saving grace, dispensed through its sacraments of baptism, penance, and Eucharist, among others. Luther objected to this view and committed himself to defending and propagating the good news of God's free grace. Luther and his fellow Reformers held that justification is a judicial picture of God's applying salvation to believers.

It is forensic, not transformational. It is a declarative act, not a lifelong process. In justification, God once and for all declares righteous and forgives every believer in Jesus.

Paul emphatically teaches that justification is received by faith, not by faith and works. We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, Galatians 2:16, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Even we ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus.

This was so we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law, no human being will be justified, Galatians 2:16. Justification does not purify sinners within and enable them to do good works. When God justifies a sinner, he or she becomes simul justus et peccator, to use Luther's famous expression. At the same time, righteous and a sinner, simul, at the same

time, we get simultaneously from that, justus, just or righteous, et and peccator, at the same time, righteous and a sinner.

God the judge declares believers righteous in Christ, and so they are in God's sight. At the same time, viewed in themselves, they are still sinners. Rome's condemnation of Luther's doctrine as promoting license misses the mark.

Although justification is not transformational, it is correlative or inseparable with other aspects of the application of salvation that are transformational. God's justifying sinners is inseparable from his regenerating and sanctifying them. In regeneration, God gives sinners new life, which is seen in their believing the gospel, loving fellow believers, and living godly lives, as 1 John attests.

In progressive sanctification, God enables believers to grow in grace, to grow in the knowledge of Christ, and to grow in practical holiness. Rome's confusing justification with progressive sanctification is an egregious error, for it results in good Christians, in quotation marks, seeking to gain or keep salvation by living for God. As the reformers recognized, Paul inseparably linked God's saving grace and faith in Christ for justification.

Quote, this is why the promise is by faith, Paul wrote in Romans 4:16, so that it may be according to grace, to guarantee it to all the descendants, to the one who is of Abraham's faith. Merit theology, the notion that human beings can earn God's favor, however hedged about by prevenient grace and so forth, is impossible, for it sets aside the grace of God. Quote, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Galatians 2:21. I want to read that from the ESV. The last verse in Galatians 2 is powerful. I do not nullify the grace of God, Paul wrote, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

He died in vain. Friends, Christ did not die in vain. He died because we needed his saving work, if we ever were to be saved.

Salvation means turning our attention away from ourselves and our deeds to Christ alone. Romans 4:25. When God joins us to Christ, he imputes our sins to him and his righteousness to us. God, quote, made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21. Christ's active righteousness, his lifelong obedience, is counted to us, as is his passive obedience, his suffering obedience, and his death on the cross. This is a traditional distinction between Christ's active and passive obedience. By the former, he meant his obedience to the Father and the law his whole life.

By the latter, it means not any passivity; that's where the word has changed its meaning because his passive obedience doesn't mean inactivity, but rather it comes from the Latin *passio*, relating to Christ's passion or sufferings. So, I like to use the terminology his active or his lifelong obedience for active obedience, and his suffering obedience, his obedience of the cross. Philippians 2. Active obedience, passive obedience, better lifelong obedience, suffering obedience.

Just as through one man's disobedience, Romans 5:19, the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous, Romans 5:19. God accepts us freely in his grace when we trust Christ alone for salvation. In some, though we are saved by grace through faith alone, saving faith never remains alone, for in Christ Jesus, Galatians 5:6, in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything. What matters is faith working through love, Galatians 5:6. Consequently, we love because he first loved us in Christ, 1 John 4:10. Because Christ loved us and laid down his life for us, we love one another, John 15:12 and 13.

Out of gratitude for grace received in justification, we are, quote, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do, Ephesians 2:10. Ephesians 2 there and the book of Titus stand out in my mind as places where scripture emphatically says salvation is not by works, but that God wants his people to be zealous for good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 just put that together so well. For by grace, you've been saved through faith, and that salvation is not of yourselves; it's a gift of God, not a result of works that no one should boast, for we are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The meaning is we are recreated, speaking of us as those who belong already to the new creation of God. This is our historical reconnaissance, and it's longer than the usual one. It's longer than the one we'll do, for example, on the Christian life with different views, although we'll give some time to it because of the importance that the historical views of Rome and the Reformation have for Christian theology.

Justification systematic formulations. Having reviewed a biblical prelude, given a biblical prelude to justification, and explored the history of the doctrine, we move to a systematic summary of justification. Biblical pictures of the application of salvation arise from various spheres.

Calling comes from the realm of our senses, particularly that of hearing. Regeneration hails from the sphere of death and life. Sanctification is related to ritual uncleanness and holiness.

Conversion concerns a change of direction, both turning from repentance and turning to Christ's faith, as we saw. Both justification and adoption are legal images,

though hailing from different sections of the court. Adoption comes from the family court, presenting God as Father, Christ as Older Brother, capital B, and Redeemer, and believers as God's beloved children to whom he gives the benefits and responsibilities of family life.

Justification, like adoption, is a legal image, but it belongs in a different division of the court, the criminal one. It is part of a larger biblical legal picture that portrays God as a lawgiver and judge of all the earth, to whom every person will give an account. Fallen human beings appear before him as guilty sinners who have rebelled against their maker and broken his law.

Christ was born under the law to redeem those under the law, Galatians 4:4 and 5. How did Jesus do this? Quote, Galatians 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. Sometimes, the old liberalism tried to remove all these legal strains from the Bible. It doesn't work because the Bible gives more than legal terminology, but it presents God, human beings, sin, Christ, his saving work, the application of salvation, and last thing, the final judgment; for example, all these are portrayed in legal terms.

Again, I'll say it: the Bible does more than that, but it does not do less than that. And yes, the application of salvation is more than justification, but it is not less than justification. Justification is a very important aspect of the application of salvation.

God, the judge, declares righteous all who trust his Son as Lord and Savior. That is, he justifies them. In answer to the question, what is justification? The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers the quote; justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

That's question and answer 33 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. As we said before, each aspect of the application of salvation is best viewed against the need we have for it. Justification's need is condemnation.

Adam and Eve did not need to be justified prior to the fall, for they were, quote, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness, Ephesians 4:24 ESV. But after the fall, they and all their progeny needed justification. Paul presents this need in two ways.

First, we need Christ's righteousness because of Adam's original sin. Romans 5:18 and 19, one trespass led to the condemnation of all people. By the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners.

Second, that's Romans 5:18 and 19. Second, we have all committed, beside Adam's original sin, we have all committed actual sins. Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In fact, this verse may refer to Adam's primal transgression. The aorist, we have all sinned, may mean in Adam. And our actual sins, the present tense, we all fall short of the glory of God, as Jimmy Dunn suggests in his commentary on Romans 1 through 8 in the That was my own understanding, although not dogmatically, before I read Dunn's commentary in that area.

Paul's developing argument in Romans underscores humanity's universal need for justification in Christ. Immediately after announcing the theme of the book, the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel, in Romans 1:16 and 17, Paul begins a long statement treating another revelation, the revelation of God's judgment on sin. I am not ashamed of the gospel, Paul says, for it is the revelation of God's righteousness to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

And then verse 18 says, God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, Romans 1:18. Paul begins this section, 1:18 through 3:20 now, with a summary that begins, there is no one righteous, not even one, there's no one who understands, there's no one who seeks God, Romans 3:10 and 11. He ends this section by saying that there is no fear of God before their eyes.

The goal of Romans 1, 18 through 3:20, quote, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become accountable to God's judgment, for no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law, Romans 3:19 and 20. So, what we've said is that the need for justification is condemnation. In Paul's great summary of Christian teaching in the book of Romans, he grounds that need. He bases that need on two things.

First of all, actual sins from Romans 1:18 to 3:20. And then in Adam's original sin in chapter 5, verses 12 through 19. Paul's strategy is shrewd.

Before we can embrace God's good news of salvation, we must understand the bad news, as Luther called it, of our sin and what it deserves: the wrath of a holy and just God. Paul presents sin and judgment not as ends in themselves but as preparation for the gospel of God's grace. Each one of us is guilty in God's eyes, unable to rescue oneself, and therefore in need of a savior.

If justification's need is condemnation, justification's source is God's grace. Paul juxtaposes Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness. Romans 5, 17.



For if by the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ? Romans 5, 17. Paul contrasts the reign of death begun by Adam's sin with the reign of life brought by Christ. The apostle upsets the balance between the two Adams and their influence on their people by writing not of life reigning through Christ but of those who will reign through him.

Far greater than the deleterious influences of Adam's sin, Christ's saving work produces an, quote, overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness, close quote, which causes his people to reign in eternal life. Douglas Moo correctly says that righteousness here is clearly the status of a new relationship with God. Doug Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, page 339.

My favorite commentary on Romans, and that is saying something. There are many good ones. It is the status of those justified by the overflow of God's grace in Jesus.

It is no surprise, then, that scripture combines grace and justification. Romans 3, 24. They are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Or Titus 3:6 and 7. God poured out his spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. Titus 3, 6 and 7. Scripture speaks clearly. The ultimate source of the justification of God's people is his matchless grace.

Luther explains it beautifully. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved.

They are not loved because they are attractive. Thus, Christ says, for I came not to call the righteous but sinners, Matthew 9:13. This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in a direction where it does not find good, which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person.

Luther's works, volume 31, page 57. In our next lecture, we will take up the basis of justification in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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